

"Yes, he is there."

"It's a chilly morning. Don't keep him waiting. Vohrenlorf, see the prince mounted."

Varvilliers laughed; even Wetter smiled faintly.

"All right, you needn't be in such a hurry. I'm going," he said.

"But I'm glad you came," said I, laughing again, and as the door closed behind him, I added, "Most lucky. His evidence will be invaluable. Fortune is with us, Varvilliers."

"A man of ready wit is with us, sire," he answered in his pleasant courtliness; then, as we heard William Adolphus trotting off and Vohrenlorf came back, he went on, "All is ready."

Wetter seemed absolutely composed. I marveled at his composure. No doubt his ideas were not medieval, as mine were; yet it seemed strange to me that he should fire at me as he would at any other man. I did not then understand the despair which underlay his iron quietness. I was set thinking, though, the next moment, when Varvilliers stepped forward, holding a pair of single barreled pistols. Wetter opened his lips for the first time:

"Why not revolvers?"

"If we allow a second shot, Vohrenlorf and I will reload. Pardon, sire, have you any other weapon about you?"

I answered "No," and Wetter made the same reply to a like question. But I had seen a sudden change pass over his face when he was told that revolvers were not to be used. An idea entered my head and would not be dislodged, a man might fire more calmly at the king if he were resolved in no case to outlive the king. I said nothing; what could I say or do now?

But strangely and suddenly, under the influence of this thought, my anger died away. I saw with his eyes and felt with his heart; I saw how we stood, and I knew that I had brought him to that pass. Was it strange that he fired at me without faltering, although I might be ten times a king? It seemed to me almost just that he should kill me. Varvilliers would not give him a revolver. Did Varvilliers also suspect? I think his fear was rather of our extreme rage against each other. It occurred to me that I would not aim at my opponent. But then I thought I had no right to act thus; it would make matters worse for him, if I fell; besides, my own life did not seem to me a thing to be thrown away lightly.

Varvilliers produced another pair of pistols, similar to those which Wetter and I now held. He loaded both weapons; carefully fired them into the targets, and placed one on a shelf at either end of the room.

"Those are the first shots. You understand? The gentleman who is hit made the mistake of not expecting a second shot. Now, sire—if you are ready."

We took up our positions, each standing six feet in front of the targets; a bullet which hit me would, but for the interruption, have struck on, or directly above or below, the outermost target on the right hand side.

Vohrenlorf and Varvilliers stood on either side of the room; the latter was to give the signal. Indeed, Vohrenlorf could not have been trusted with such a duty.

"I shall say, 'One—two—three,'" said Varvilliers. "You will both fire before the last word is ended. Are you ready?"

*(To be continued.)*

#### THE SECRET.

Of one great secret Omar knew  
Little as I, as much as you;  
And Shakspeare's soul and Milton's brain  
Perplexèd paused at death's domain.

Dear God, Who gave us thought and breath,  
Divulge the mystery of death!  
What suns shall light, what waters lave,  
The mystic shores beyond the grave?

*Robert Loveman.*

# THE RACE FOR THE NORTH POLE.

BY BRIGADIER GENERAL A. W. GREELY, UNITED STATES ARMY.

THE COMMANDER OF THE PROTEUS EXPEDITION. REVIEWS THE INTERESTING WORK GOING ON IN THE ARCTIC—THREE EXPLORERS (TWO AMERICANS AND ONE NORWEGIAN) WHO ARE NOW TRYING TO REACH THE POLE.

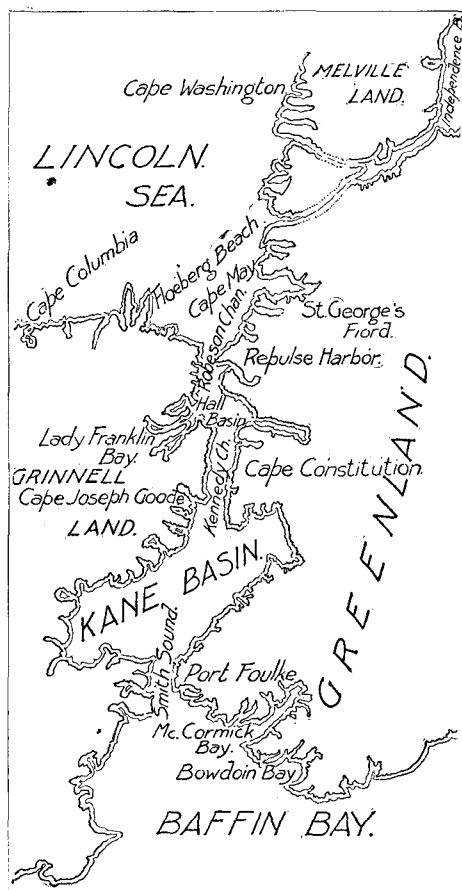
FOR three hundred years the mind of adventurous man has turned to the Great White North as the arena in which nature sets her sternest challenge before human daring. The brave men of yore whose "purpose held to sail beyond the sunset"—had in Milton's mind a noble spirit worthy of every man's emulation and admiration, for no hope of sordid gain mars the thought and endeavor of

the genuine polar traveler. It is doubtless for this reason that public interest continues in arctic work, although it is largely barren of utilitarian results, and only presents phases of manly rivalry in efforts and accomplishments that tax physical energies and mental powers to the utmost.

Among the workers in this perilous field there have been many sons of our young giant of the West, that now stretches its broad arms to the East. What American fails to honor, among the dead of the arctic, the generous and altruistic Kane, the gallant Rodgers, the enthusiastic Hall, who followed his sledge to his very death; the twin heroes De Long and Ambler, who died rather than leave behind a helpless comrade; and the persevering Lockwood, whose efforts outdid all predecessors of any race or time? It was he who threw far northward on the frozen polar sea the golden apple of accomplishment, and left as a goal for emulous man the farthest land of the polar circle. It is to outdo his work that another American, a member of the sister service, strives today, and aims yet to the north, even to the pole.

Four expeditions spent last winter within the arctic circle, if we include the balloon party of the brave, enthusiastic, but unfortunate Andrée. The others are the Americans Peary and Wellman, and the Norwegian Sverdrup.

Andrée's plan to reach the north pole by balloon was brought before the Sixth International Geographical Congress, at London, in 1896. He believed that he could construct an enormous balloon, which would maintain its impermeability to such an extent that it would float thirty days; that it could carry three persons, with instruments and food supplies for four months; and that he could control the direction of the balloon to a considerable extent. Funds were raised, and Andrée



SKETCH MAP OF THE "AMERICAN POLAR ROUTE,"  
EXPLORED BY KANE, HALL, GREELY, AND  
PEARY.